



November 27, 2012

Dear Friend:

As we look back on 2012 we're so grateful to the donors who make the Better Government Association watchdog work possible. Your support contributed to one of the most successful years in BGA history. But our work is far from finished.

The election on Nov. 6th gave one party veto-proof majorities in the House and Senate in Springfield. Who's going to watch them and demand pension reform, budget and fiscal responsibility and more efficiency? The BGA.

Chicago, Cook County, DuPage County and the Chicago Board of Education have new leadership. How are they doing? The BGA will find out.

There's so much to do in 2013 in addition to all we've done in 2012, thanks to your support. At the top of our list is *Shining a Light on Springfield* by opening a BGA office in the state capital. Why? Because the numbers just don't add up.

Almost 100 billion tax dollars flow through all levels of government in Illinois every year. Half of those spending decisions are made in one building in Springfield – the Capitol. That's roughly \$50 billion in decision-making 200 miles away from the BGA and the state's most influential media outlets. If we're going to keep an eye on how public officials spend our tax dollars in Illinois, we must be in Springfield – not watching from 200 miles away.

We can't Shine a Light on Springfield without your help. Please consider a generous donation to help the BGA create a permanent watchdog presence in Springfield. A presence that will demand the integrity, transparency, accountability and efficiency we deserve.

REAL REFORM

The BGA's watchdog efforts are having an impact. Government is responding and we're beginning to see real reform. Just take a look at some of the progress we made this year.

Eliminated Corrupt Legislative Scholarships Program

In July, Governor Quinn signed a bill to eliminate the Legislative Scholarship Program after the BGA and others exposed rampant abuse of the program. Taxpayers and universities are saving \$13 million a year.

Ended Public Pension Abuses

With in-depth investigations, the BGA continues to uncover disturbing abuses in the public pension systems - schemes designed to game the system, boost retiree payments and cost taxpayers millions. BGA investigations prompted several reforms, including one in south suburban Lansing, where trustees voted to eliminate a pension sweetener that cost taxpayers several million dollars.

Exposed Government Waste & Mismanagement

Waste and mismanagement are two of the most troubling problems our governments face. They may not be criminal, but they're corrosive and expensive. BGA investigators examined a milk contract at the Chicago Board of Education and found the city was paying more for milk than other school districts. The contract was immediately renegotiated, saving taxpayers \$750,000 a year. We also investigated excessive payouts for sick days at the Chicago Board of Education, golden parachutes at the City Colleges of Chicago and various suburbs, credit card abuse and bloated government bureaucracies.

Updated BGA Integrity Index

The Integrity Index is among the BGA's most widely quoted and popular research tools. The new version of the BGA-Alper Integrity Index will exceed past efforts and provide a comprehensive measure of existing laws that promote honest and open government in each of the 50 states. Among the laws the Index gauges are: Freedom of Information Act, whistleblower protection, Open Meetings Act and conflict of interest regulations.

Launched BGA Pension Database and Updated Payroll Databases

At www.bettergov.org you can keep an eye on the taxpayer-supported pensions of over 400,000 retirees, and the salaries of more than 500,000 employees. These databases shine a light on how government spends your tax dollars and support the BGA's effort to keep government transparent and accessible to the public.

Help us take the next step to expand the scope and impact of the BGA. Please make a year-end donation today to help the BGA Shine a Light on Springfield and all of Illinois.

Your ardent watchdog,



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P.S. The BGA is a nonprofit organization with 501 (c) (3) tax status, so all contributions are tax deductible.